Summary of NEERS5 Conference Calls

September 12, 2007: 11am ET; September 13, 2007: 4pm ET & 7pm ET

I. Update on status of NEERS5 - CSREES is in the process of finalizing a contract agreement to develop SRS5. The process will include working with SSA to complete the software, sending the software to the beta testing team to carefully review (as was done with CRS5), and then releasing SRS5 to the states. The new software will not have all the special features originally planned, but it will allow for aggregation of data at the state level. **Ideally the project will be completed by December 2007.** However, an interim plan for states is needed as this timeline may be <u>overly optimistic</u>.

II. Key Points

    a. A message was sent on August 22, 2007, to FCS leaders, EFNEP and FSNE Coordinators and FNS to inform everyone of the situation. CSREES will follow-up as soon as contract is finalized

    b. State data reports <u>will not</u> be due to CSREES on November 1st. The reporting deadline will be conveyed once there is a better understanding of the release date of SRS5. The need to learn to use the system will be taken into consideration.

    c. Delays in the release of SRS5 <u>will not</u> affect other reporting requirements such as budget sheets, budget justifications and Annual Updates (see <u>Letter of Intent webpage</u> for reporting deadlines and information)

    d. State data reports for FY07 <u>must be</u> submitted to CSREES through NEERS5. If for some reason counties have not converted from ERS4 to CRS5 they will need to do so prior to submission. ERS4 data is not compatible with SRS5 and SRS4 data will not be compatible with the federal software. Instructions on converting ERS4 data to CRS5 are available in the <u>Transition Manual</u> starting on page 20.

III. What to do with County Data – *Steps States can Complete now*

    a. Check the quality of the data - Have counties **back-up** their CRS5 data and send to the state office. The state office can then **restore** and review the data within CRS5. See <u>NEERS5 FAQs</u> for instructions.

    b. Store the county data - Ask counties to **export** their CRS5 data and send to the state office. <u>The export file cannot be restored within CRS5</u> but export files can be saved at the state office so all data is ready to be imported into SRS5 upon its release.

    Please note: Program participant names, addresses and phone numbers are protected when transmitting back-up and exported databases. The zipped files are password protected and cannot be opened independent of NEERS5 until back-up files are restored or export files are imported into SRS5. Nonetheless, it is always important to take proper precautions to protect data when transmitting, saving, and storing.

c. Once FY07 county data is finalized within CRS5, counties can **begin a new reporting period.** Even though SRS5 is not yet available, it does not prevent counties from beginning to enter FY08 data into the CRS5.

IV. Implications of the Delays of SRS5

a. **EFNEP -** Nearly everyone (99%) of state respondents indicated that they would be 'ok' in terms of reporting to other stakeholders. For 18% of these respondents (12 out of 67), an interim solution is needed if SRS5 is not released by the end of the calendar year.

b. **FSNE –** It was indicated that FNS would not grant an extension and therefore FSNE coordinators need an interim solution for reporting. Helen has initiated discussion with FNS Headquarters, but it will also be critical for the states to communicate with state agencies and regional offices about what they are able to provide – noting that a potential solution has been identified, which may or may not limit their ability to report on all items initially planned and which will include an additional reporting burden for states for just this year.

c. **Both Programs -** The timeframe and needs of both programs were understood. CSREES committed to doing what they could to support interim reporting needs.

V. Identification of a Strategy for Interim Reporting Needs *(where applicable)* - CSREES is committed to providing a permanent solution (SRS5) not just a temporary fix. However, we recognize the need for states to have an interim solution for aggregating data at this time. Three possible short-term solutions were offered for discussion. A considerable investment of time is required of both the state offices and CSREES to develop and implement a temporary solution; only one can be applied for the system. The options presented were:

a. **Option 1 - CSREES develops an excel spreadsheet for state use** *(this option is explained in more detail as it received the most favorable response by states)* - CSREES can put together an excel spreadsheet with embedded formulas to aggregate values from county reports. The process would entail having each county back-up their database and send it to the state office. The state office would then have to restore the database, view the summary reports and manually transfer data points from CRS5 to the excel spreadsheet.

b. **Option 2 - CSREES develops a form or excel spreadsheet for county use.** Completed forms would then be sent to the state office for aggregation.

c. **Option 3 - CSREES provides instructions on CRS5 Access Fields/Tables and How to Calculate the Data.**

VI. Determination of the Best Solution for the System - CSREES is not able to provide support for each solution. Therefore, it was necessary to determine which interim approach would be best for most states in the system. Across all three calls, both EFNEP and FSNE coordinators selected Option 1 - for CSREES to develop an excel spreadsheet for state use, as the best

interim solution. Option 2 was universally disregarded, and only a few states were interested in Option 3. Although Option 3 seems appealing it was pointed out that the time and effort it would take to learn the access fields and create a system to analyze the data would probably not be worthwhile as an interim solution. A few states may have the statistical and analytical help to assist them in that process. But it is not a viable solution for most.

VII. Next Steps

a. **Create an Outline of Potential Data Points –** Stephanie will compile an outline of proposed data points to be included in the state-level spreadsheet and distribute the outline to the system.

b. **Compile Feedback –** Stephanie will ask for timely feedback and will consider state recommendations for additional data points. Note: all data points will not be included but effort will be made to include critical data points as identified by the states.

c. **Develop and Distribute the Excel Spreadsheet –** After the state recommendations are compiled, Stephanie will develop the excel spreadsheet with embedded formulas and distribute to the states. We are hopeful that this can be turned around relatively quickly because there are some states dealing with fast approaching deadlines. In the meantime states can begin having counties backup and send their CRS5 databases to the state office (see NEERS5 FAQs for instructions).

VIII. Final Comments and Reminders

a. **The Interim Solution is not a Requirement –** If states do not have a need for an interim solution they are not required to make use of the excel spreadsheet CSREES distributes.

b. **FY07 Data Reports will be Submitted through NEERS5 –** As a reminder states will need to submit FY07 reports through NEERS5. If a state has not had its counties convert their data from ERS4 to CRS5 it will need to do so prior to the reporting deadline.

c. **We will Continue to Communicate –** Helen stressed that she intends to keep strong communication with the system and to update FCS Leaders, EFNEP and FSNE Coordinators, and FNS as we gain more information related to the release of SRS5 and related to FY07 reporting.

IX. Resources

a. **NEERS5 website** – www.csrees.usda.gov/neers5: *includes FAQs, Transition Manual, Software Update Information, etc.*
b. **CRS Help-Desk** – crs-help@lyris.csrees.usda.gov: *for technical support*
c. **NEERS5 listserv** – neers5@lyris.csrees.usda.gov

Figure 1: The Nutrition Education Evaluation and Reporting Software version 5 (NEERS5) Data Flow Chart
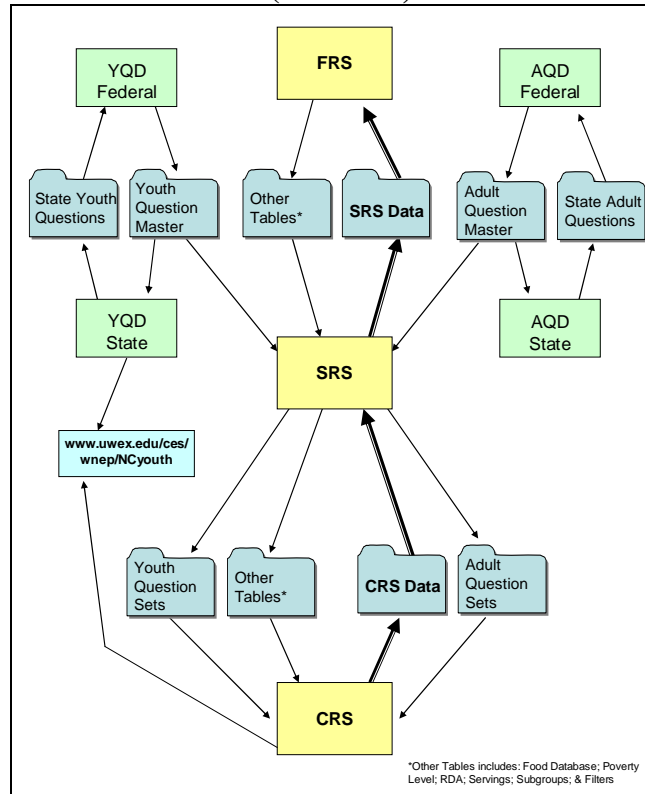

Figure 2: Status of the County Reporting System version 5 (CRS5)
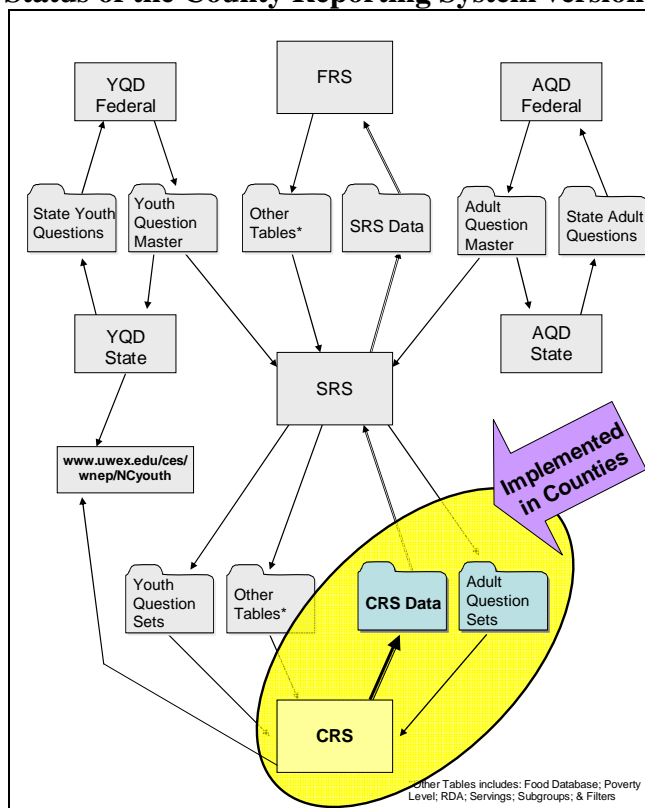
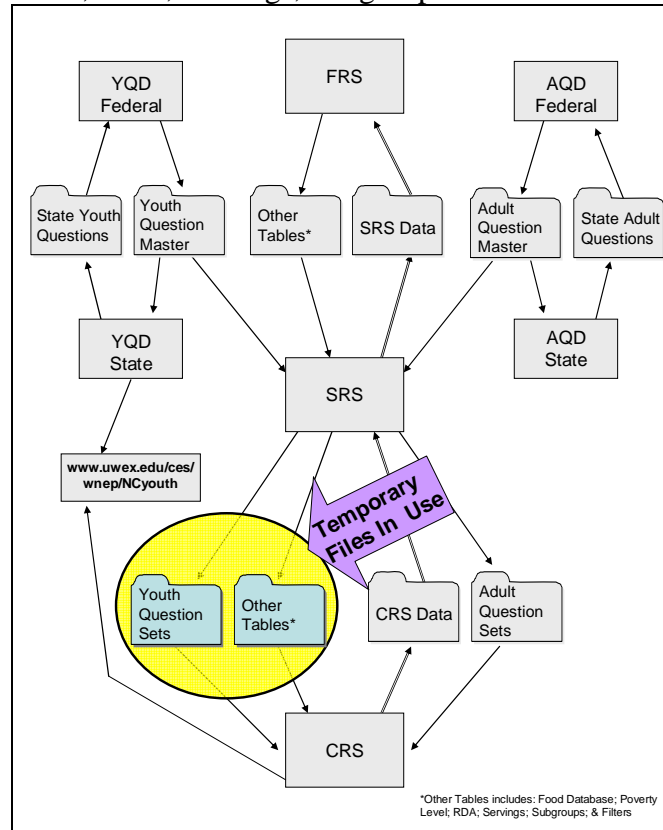**Figure 3: Status of Other Tables** (Foods Database, Poverty Level, RDA, Servings, Subgroups & Filters

Figure 4: Status of the State Reporting System version 5 (SRS5)